

In fact, the average grant award represented only 30 percent of the cost of the vests, a 20 percent shortfall on the federal side. These agencies came to us in good faith and committed to providing vests to their officers if the federal government matched their funds. For many smaller agencies, this shortfall is devastating, and could end up taking away funding from other important departmental programs. Therefore, we must, in turn, honor our commitment to provide these agencies with the full 50 percent of the costs of these vests. In order to do so, S. 2413 doubles the yearly authorization of the program to \$50 million from Fiscal Year (FY) 2002 through FY 2004. This figure, based on demand from the first two years of the program, should be sufficient to fully fund all grant requests at the 50 percent matching level we promised in 1998.

The original authorization of this program also included a provision to allow the purchase of stabproof vests for corrections officers and sheriff's deputies who regularly face violent criminals in close quarters in our nation's jails. The primary threat to these officers comes from homemade knives. The ingenuity displayed in smuggling in and creating sharp weapons in prison is phenomenal. This combination of violent felons and deadly weapons often leads to explosive conflicts into which deputies and corrections officers must insert themselves to restore order. In order to do this, they must be confident that they have the best protection possible from the criminals they must subdue.

Unfortunately, the Department of Justice decided that requests for funding for stabproof vests under the Bulletproof Vest Partnership Grant program were not valid until a national standard for such vests is developed by the National Institutes of Justice (NIJ). After over two years of development, NIJ continues to delay the implementation of such a standard. In order to address this issue, we supported amendments to the measures, offered by Chairman McCOLLUM during subcommittee consideration of H.R. 4033 in the House and by Senator LEAHY during floor consideration of S. 2413 in the Senate, which will allow states to develop their own stabproof vest standards, independent of NIJ or the Department of Justice. These standards will then be used as a basis for agencies within each state to purchase stabproof vests through the Bulletproof Vest Partnership Grant program and until NIJ makes good on their promise to complete a national standard.

Finally, the Bulletproof Vest Partnership Grant Act of 2000 would take extra precautions to ensure that those small agencies, which are often in most need of additional funding for bulletproof vests, would receive the entire grant for which they apply. As I noted earlier, many smaller agencies find themselves unable to purchase vests for their officers due to limited funding. The program, to date, has not fulfilled their expectations, because it has fallen short of giving many of these agencies a full grant. Therefore, S. 2413 includes a provision which ensures that smaller jurisdictions, with under 100,000 residents, will receive all of the funding they request before money is allotted to larger jurisdictions. This is more of a safeguard than a limitation. Under statistics from the first two years of the program, less than \$15 million would be needed to fully fund these small jurisdictions. Under a \$50 million authorization, this would leave

well over half of the funding to larger jurisdictions. However, with an expected increase in demand due to the new treatment of stabproof vests, it is vital that we ensure smaller communities that their police officers will be cared for. We must protect the Crown Point, Indiana, officer who unknowingly pulls over an armed drug dealer on U.S. Highway 231 as much as the New York City officer involved in an orchestrated drug raid.

Our legislation is intended to reauthorize a highly successful program which provides a partnership between the federal government and state and local law enforcement agencies in order to make sure that every police and corrections officer who needs a bulletproof vest gets one. It is clear to us that every officer on the street should have a vest, and that the need to supply officers with vests is important enough to warrant direct federal assistance. Furthermore, the overwhelming positive response we have received from law enforcement agencies and officers to this program highlights the continued need for the program.

Mr. Speaker, at the heart of this effort is our desire to save the lives of police officers. When we make this commitment, we offer protection not just to the officers, but to every community in America. We prevent the suffering of families of fallen officers. We prevent the loss of leaders in our communities. Perhaps most importantly, we give those who protect us the ability to do their job better, more confidently, and with a knowledge that their entire nation is behind them every day, in even the most dangerous situations.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to stand up in support of our police and corrections officers, and vote for S. 2413.

RETIREMENT OF HON. TILLIE FOWLER

SPEECH OF

HON. E. CLAY SHAW, JR.

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 24, 2000

Mr. SHAW. Mr. Speaker, for the past eight years, I have had the privilege of serving in the U.S. House of Representatives with the distinguished gentlelady from Jacksonville, Florida, Tillie Fowler. It has been my and my wife, Emilie's great pleasure to get to know Tillie and her husband Buck. They have become close friends of ours as we worked together to serve our constituents in Florida.

The residents of Florida's 4th Congressional District have been fortunate to be represented by a hard-working, dedicated Member of Congress. Tillie has served as the Vice-Chairman of the Republican Conference, making her the highest-ranking woman in the Congress and the only Floridian who is part of the leadership. While she has been involved in the leadership, she has not neglected the needs of her constituents.

Her service on the Armed Services and Transportation Committees has been exemplary. She worked very hard to ensure that Florida received its fair share of highway funding.

Tillie Fowler is a class-act and we need more individuals like her here. We will truly miss her. But we know that she will not stop serving the residents of Florida no matter what she does next.

RETIREMENT OF HON. TILLIE FOWLER

SPEECH OF

HON. TILLIE K. FOWLER

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, October 24, 2000

Mrs. FOWLER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to make my last address as an honored Member of this distinguished body. There is no doubt in my mind what I will miss the most about this job. It will not be the late nights—and it will not be the ever-changing schedule. I will miss my friends—and I have made so many.

This institution is filled with so many extraordinary people, who, in my time here, have done some extraordinary things.

I make it a point in every speech I give back home to talk about the people I serve with here in this great body. I want people to know that the portrayal they see of politicians in the press and on TV is far from accurate. While scandals and controversy may sell newspapers, they are certainly not the norm around here.

I never give a speech without talking about the dedication, the devotion and the selflessness with which nearly every Member of Congress serves this institution and his or her country.

I may not always agree with someone's politics or ideology, but I would never question the sincerity or the purpose with which they pursue their agendas. People serve here for the right reasons—I truly believe that.

Serving with all of you has been such an honor. And as I look back over the last eight years, I look with pride at what we were able to do in such a short time.

Together, we reformed Congress. We have made this institution more open, more accountable and more responsive to the people. When I first set foot on this House floor in 1993, Congress' approval rating was a dismal 17 percent. That number is much higher today.

Together, with the hard work of the American people, we turned around an economy saddled by high interest rates and high unemployment.

Together, we balanced the federal budget for the first time since I was a staffer on Capitol Hill back in the 1960's.

Together we ended welfare as we knew it, and created a new system that rewards work and responsibility.

If I have one wish as I leave this institution, it is that some progress can be made toward reducing the partisanship that has plagued us.

I have tried very hard over my eight years to focus on the task at hand and leave the partisanship on the Capitol steps. When you look back at some of our best accomplishments, you find that they were mostly gained with support from both sides of the aisle. That should be a lesson to future Congresses.

I was proud to serve on the planning committee for the two bi-partisan retreats, and I hope that those retreats will continue and their mission expand.

I was also proud to serve on Speaker Hastert's leadership team these past two years. When he was unexpectedly tapped for the speakership, I said then he was the right man for the right time. Working with him the last two years, I witnessed first hand how true that statement was.